

South Carolina Education Oversight Committee

Objectives & Critical Actions

2003-2004

South Carolina's 2010 Education Goal:

South Carolina's student achievement
will be ranked in the top half of states nationally.

To achieve this goal,
we must become one of the five fastest improving
systems in the country.

South Carolina is brimming with possibilities. As the state's economy moves from agriculture, textiles and light manufacturing to knowledge-based industries, we have the potential to succeed in the new century. It's a future that can be competitive if we create a talent pool of students possessing the knowledge and skills needed to succeed in the jobs of the future. SC must have a workforce ready to utilize information technologies, to solve problems creatively, and to exhibit the ethical, responsible behaviors our communities and employers need.

A community's well-being - social, health, civic, and economic vitality - depends upon the education our young people achieve. For too long, our school performance has not matched the aspirations our state holds for her people. While we have experienced some improvement over the past several years, we continue to be challenged by historic underachievement.

As individuals, communities and a state, we are rising to the challenge. We are examining the way we teach our children, the support we provide schools, and the aspirations we hold for ourselves. The cumulative impact of accountability systems, support for high quality teaching, parental involvement and strong leadership is yielding results.

We are experiencing success but we must stay vigilant. Even in difficult financial times, states that are staying the course show significant improvements over time. We must not be deterred. SC's future depends upon our collective will.

How do we measure progress toward SC's school performance?

Nine performance measures are used to measure our progress and achievement of the 2010 goal:

- 1.** SC will rank in the top half of states on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) and other international and national measures.
- 2.** Nine out of ten SC students will score Proficient or above on the Palmetto Achievement Challenge Test (PACT).
- 3.** SC will rank in the top half of states on the Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT) and American College Test (ACT).
- 4.** SC Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate program exam passage rates will be at or above the national average.
- 5.** SC's high school completion rate will be at or above the national average.
- 6.** SC's dropout rate will be in the lower half of states nationally.
- 7.** SC will be in the top half of states in the percentage of students with disabilities earning a high school diploma.
- 8.** SC will rank in the top half of states in freedom from drugs, weapons, violence and teacher victimization by students.
- 9.** The achievement gap among students of different racial/ethnic groups and different economic status will be eliminated.

Are we making gains? Yes! Among our successes are the following:

- SC's fourth-grade student performance in math on NAEP was higher than counterparts in 16 states and statistically the same as fourth-graders in 23 other states. Only 10 states performed better than SC. The percentage scoring Proficient or above increased from 18 percent in 2000 to 32 percent in 2003.
- SC's average SAT score has risen 38 points in the past five years - the largest improvement in the nation.
- SC's 2003 AP performance is near the national average with 58 percent of exams scoring a three or above; the national rate is 60 percent. SC passage rates have increased steadily each year from 1995 when the figure was 50 percent.
- SC's participation rate in the IB program

is increasing rapidly. Since 1995, the number of high schools offering the program has grown from two to 14. The number of tests taken has increased from 136 to 1,646.

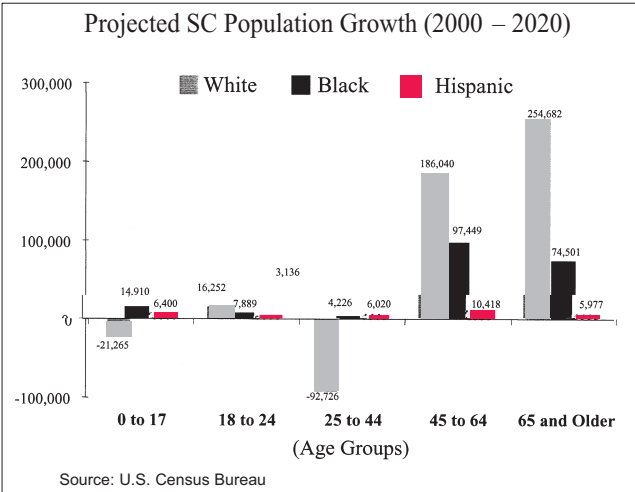
- SC's accountability system was rated B (ranked 12th among states) and a B+ for improving teacher quality (ranked first among states) in the 2003 Quality Counts, a national publication of Education Week.
- SC's assessment program was rated 11th in the nation by Princeton Review (2003).
- SC's content standards were rated third in the nation by the Fordham Foundation (2000).
- SC has increased the number of nationally board-certified teachers to 3,225 in 2003.

What are the areas of concern or barriers to our progress?

SC and her students continue to face barriers. Students have difficulty making the transition from elementary to middle school. Test scores decline and parent involvement in school drops off in the middle school. The transition to high school is equally difficult. Higher content standards, expectations for attendance and the impact of cumulative underperformance stymie too many ninth graders.

Teacher shortages, especially in critical areas of special education, mathematics and science frustrate us all. Some geographic areas are unable to attract sufficient numbers of teachers regardless of certification area. Other districts find their salaries are not competitive with higher -paying neighboring districts. Schools and districts exhibiting the lowest student achievement typically have the highest turnover rates among administrators and teachers.

The US Census Bureau projects SC's largest population group through 2020 will be citizens who are 45 years and older, while the smallest group are children and young adults. In an era of changing demographics, local and statewide understanding and advocacy for strong public schools must be deepened.



What actions is the EOC undertaking to continue SC's progress?

Objective 1:

Continue to implement the provisions and fulfill the responsibilities of the Education Accountability Act of 1998.

Education accountability, as defined in the preamble to the EAA, is the "acceptance of the responsibility for improving student performance and taking actions to improve classroom practice and school performance by the Governor, the General Assembly, the State Department of Education, colleges and universities, local school boards, administrators, teachers, parents, students, and the community" (Section 59-18-100). Results of SC's 2003 school and district absolute ratings reveal incremental improvement in student achievement, while improvement ratings illustrate the rate of improvement is not at the level needed to achieve the 2010 goal. The EOC is strengthening its efforts to evaluate every aspect of SC's accountability system. Within each of the five major components (Standards, Assessments, Professional Development and Technical Assistance, Public Reporting and Rewards and Interventions) we must take steps to ensure all students achieve at high levels.

SC is hindered by the low expectations students have for themselves, the historic undereducation of her citizenry, and the remnants of a society that did not place equal value on students of differing demographic groups. Making a difference begins with understanding the successes and challenges unique to each school and district. In concert with its mission to "effect the dramatic, results-based and continuous improvement of SC's educational system by creating a truly collaborative environment of parents, educators, community leaders and policymakers," the EOC is implementing several approaches to build grassroots support for individual achievement and for investments to strengthen the educational system. Structured and positive dialogue between schools and communities can lead to deeper understanding of each other's roles and responsibilities and builds bonds essential to effective schools.

To facilitate solutions to complex issues, the EOC proposes the following initiatives:

- *Increase actions to promote public and community involvement in the promotion of strong public schools;*
- *Strengthen relationships with elected officials at all levels of government to ensure that the education of young people is a first priority in communities and the state.*

Objective 2:

Define sufficient funding for schools and develop models for shared responsibility between state and local governments.

In spite of the austere economic conditions facing our state, educators, parents and policymakers are pursuing the 2010 goal with great determination and diligence. The question remains, do all school districts have sufficient resources to assure every student can achieve at high academic levels and meet the requirements and goals of the standards-based accountability system?

In its second year of analyzing the state's funding system, the EOC is exploring the fundamental question of sufficient funding for all schools. What level of support is needed to achieve the state's goals for academic achievement? The analysis focuses on desired results of the system. It explores revenues currently expended for public education and compares them to the cost of providing a quality public education system for students in grades kindergarten through twelve, including students ages 17 through 21 in adult education classes. The model considers issues as teacher-student ratios, academic assistance, and the differences in student needs. The study examines best practices and the goal of developing local education capacity.

To determine the cost of such a system, the EOC will:

- *Define adequate funding needed to achieve the state's goal with models incorporating recognition of student poverty, measures to ensure teacher quality, and elimination of selected process or program requirements;*
- *Explore alternative revenue streams and the related responsibilities of state and local governing bodies.*

Objective 3:

Advocate legislation and align budget recommendations to implement systems and structures to ensure that South Carolina schools have the capacity to reach the state's 2010 goal and the goals of No Child Left Behind.

During the past year, the EOC analyzed student performance on the 2002 Palmetto Achievement Challenge Test (PACT) to determine the achievement gaps among ethnic and socioeconomic student groups. Reducing achievement gaps among student groups by raising the scores of lower scoring members of those groups is a necessary component of our efforts to raise overall achievement.

Closing and eventually eliminating the gaps is crucial if SC is to meet the goals and requirements of the accountability system.

A June 2003 EOC study identified 87 elementary and middle schools out of 844 statewide that were closing the gap among African-American students or students participating in the free/reduced lunch program. Which programs and initiatives should the state use to reduce the achievement gap and to increase academic achievement for all students? Answers to this question require accurate data on individual students and teachers to evaluate and prescribe consistent actions and policies.

National research, as well as results of the state's annual school report cards, reveal schools employing high quality teachers and principals with advanced degrees, experiencing low teacher turnover, and expending a higher percentage of funds on teacher salaries have higher student academic achievement. Attracting and retaining quality educators includes paying competitive salaries, providing positive working environments, nurturing relationships among educators, parents and community leaders and implementing quality professional development opportunities. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, 40 percent of current public school administrators are expected to retire in the next ten years. In preparation, some districts are identifying teachers as potential administrators and providing them with leadership development opportunities.

The issues are even more complex in our underperforming schools and/or schools with high percentages students from economically disadvantaged homes. Since passage of the EAA in 1998 the state has provided a variety of technical assistance including teacher and principal specialists, external review team evaluations, homework centers, and retraining grants for professional development activities. The state must consider the impact of these programs on student academic achievement and on the ability of these schools and districts to develop local capacity. About \$50.8 million was appropriated in the 2003-04 General Appropriation Act for all EAA technical assistance programs and another \$67.7 million for other EAA-related programs. The state must consider what, if any, changes are needed in the delivery or type of assistance provided.

To address these issues, the EOC proposes the following initiatives:

- *Review accountability reports for professional development programs to determine the most effective use of resources;*
- *Explore salary structures, incentives and working environments to promote employment packages that ensure highly qualified administrators and teachers in the pre-kindergarten through postsecondary system;*
- *Identify teaching and learning practices and policies that eliminate the achievement gaps by advancing the achievement of all students to a high level;*

- *Align technical assistance programs with strategies that ensure the development of local capacity and responsibility;*
- *Propose changes to the state assessment systems to provide more information to teachers and parents and to contain costs.*

Objective 4:

Provide the resources and professional development so that data-based decision-making is implemented at all levels within the educational system.

The EAA established "a performance based accountability system for public education which focuses on improving teaching and learning so that every student is equipped with a strong academic foundation" [Section 59-18-100]. The federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act also requires the collection and effective use of individual student data for continuous education improvement. School and district ratings and Adequate Yearly Progress are based on individual student assessment data.

Accurate information on student enrollment, demographics and program participation is essential to evaluate the performance of schools and programs and take into account student mobility and continuous enrollment. An adequate statewide student data-collection system makes it easier for a state to meet legal reporting requirements of the accountability system. It also makes possible the analyses necessary for educators to evaluate programs and policies, to identify and study best practices, and to continuously improve schools. The comprehensive data collection system is dependent upon a unique statewide student identifier to match individual student records accurately over time and across databases. Assignment of a unique statewide identifier ensures that no student falls through the cracks. Easily available data in flexible formats are more likely to be utilized.

Many states have "data warehouses" in which student assessment and a variety of school operations data are linked in a single source that is accessible to educators, parents, and community members. SC has taken initial steps toward a data warehouse for several years but sufficient funds to implement it have not been available.

To facilitate the development and use of the data system, the EOC proposes to:

- *Advocate for a unique student identifier and teacher/faculty identifier for students and personnel in the state's public schools and public institutions of postsecondary education;*
- *Establish an interactive data warehouse to improve the quality of data, the ease of collection and access to information for decision-making.*

The SC Education Oversight Committee

Established by the Education Accountability Act of 1998, the EOC is an independent, non-partisan, 18-member legislative committee made up of educators, business persons, and elected officials who serve by virtue of their elected position or by appointment of the legislature or governor. It bears responsibilities for the development and improvement of SC's educational accountability system and for making recommendations to ensure the continuous improvement of schools.

Mission

Our mission is to effect the dramatic, results-based and continuous improvement of South Carolina's educational system by creating a truly collaborative environment of parents, educators, community leaders and policymakers.

2003-2004 Membership:

Robert Staton, Chairman	Columbia
Alex Martin, Vice-Chairman	Greenville
Traci Young Cooper	Columbia
Robert Daniel	Anderson
Dennis Drew	Greenwood
Mike Fair	Greenville
Warren Giese	Columbia
Wallace Hall (<i>on military leave</i>)	Abbeville
Robert W. Harrell, Jr.	Charleston
Susan Hoag	Greenville
Hugh K. Leatherman Sr.	Florence
Harry Lightsey, III	Columbia
Susan Marlowe	Charleston
George Martin (<i>interim for Wallace Hall</i>)	Belton
Harold Stowe	Conway
Inez Tenenbaum	Lexington
Robert Walker	Landrum
Larry Wilson	Columbia
Judy H. Williams	Columbia



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